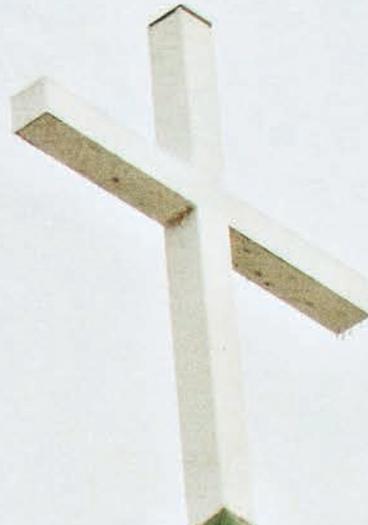


Theoacademy

BEING PRESBYTERIAN PREPARATION FOR ORDERED MINISTRY

Session 11: The Word in Worship



Theocademy

A ministry of the
Synod of Mid-America

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Getting started

Before watching the video, consider the following questions.

- How and when do you use scripture?
- Are there any parts of the Bible that you especially like? Why?
- Are there any parts of the Bible that particularly confuse or frustrate you? Why?

During the video

As you watch the video, answer the following questions.

- How does Dr. Margaret Aymer describe the relationship between the word and the Word?
- Why do we as 21st-century Christians need the biblical witness?
- In what ways does scripture “infuse” worship?
- In what ways may the word be proclaimed in worship?
- How does proclamation fuel ministry?

Interacting with the word

In the last session, we explored *why* we worship. In this session and the next, we'll look at *how* God's Spirit works through the word and sacraments to empower us for worship.

As Dr. Aymer has noted, the Bible is incredibly important to how we as Christians understand and live out our faith. But that leaves us with a very important question: how do we go about understanding the *Bible*? Back in 1982, as the UPCUSA and the PCUS began to consolidate, theologians and scholars from both denominations got together to try and figure out how Presbyterians should understand and use the Bible. The document they published in 1983, *The Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture*,¹ lays out a set of guidelines for us to consider and incorporate into our Bible study. However, merely reading through the list of principles won't mean much unless you get a chance to try it out as you go. So, for the purposes of this study, let's consider the following passage:²

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands: ² "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. ³ I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God. Revelation 2:1-7, NRSV

Biblical understanding is a gift from God.

As the *Presbyterian Understanding* states, "The work of interpretation leads to God's authoritative and convincing word for us only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit" (p. 15). In other words, no matter how much training we've had, which tools we use, or which people we talk to, true understanding of God's word can only come from God.

- Part of our worship liturgy as Presbyterians is a "prayer of illumination" that comes right before the reading of scripture. Why is that prayer important?

¹ Available online at <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/presbyterian-understanding-and-use-holy-scripture/>. I've taken the liberty of combining and condensing their long lists of considerations for the purposes of this study.

² Yes, if you're wondering, I specifically chose a passage out of Revelation because it's typically the book that most intimidates Christians. You're ordained church leaders – you didn't think I'd make it easy on you, did you?

In addition to the “plain sense” of the text and the way other scriptural passages talk about our text, we have the opportunity to learn about what our fellow believers have to say (and have said) about this idea. In other words, we were never called to be theological Lone Rangers – we are to take into account our Church’s rich history and tradition of study and reflection (including our creeds and confessions) when we interpret scripture.

- From what you know of our Church’s confessional history, does anything speak to this passage?

- Where might you go to find more background information (theological, historical, political, etc.) on this passage?

Biblical study is guided by the rule of love.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus to name the greatest commandment, he told them, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.’ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Properly interpreted biblical passages will help us to love God and one another better.

- How does this passage challenge us to love God better?

- How does this passage challenge us to love one another better?

Putting it all together

These principles were never meant to be used in isolation from one another – they are to stand in conversation with one another, helping us to gain multiple perspectives from which we can view the passage at hand.

